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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000591

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER  
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY  
PARIS FOR C. NEARY  
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/01/2013

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: MILITARY, POLICE AND CIO LAUNCH NATIONWIDE  
CRACKDOWN ON STAYAWAY PLANNERS

REF: A. HARARE 570

[B](#). HARARE 557

[C](#). HARARE 546

[D](#). HARARE 515

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d.

Summary:

[1](#). (C) There are credible reports that the GOZ has undertaken a campaign of retribution against MDC activists and supporters across the country since the first day of the MDC-organized stayaway on March 18. Police have arrested over a hundred MDC supporters, and the Zimbabwean Defense Forces (ZDF), ZRP, and ZANU-PF youths have beaten dozens of perceived MDC supporters. We anticipate that the GOZ may continue to use the stayaway as an excuse to arrest ever-higher MDC officials in the coming weeks. End Summary.

Harare

[2](#). (U) By March 21, according to the MDC and independent press, police in Harare had arrested over 100 suspected MDC activists and supporters. The government-owned The Herald reported that only 53 people were arrested in Harare for incidents relating to the mass action. The MDC also reported on March 21 that 83 supporters had sought medical help from the MDC social welfare division, and had received vouchers for medical services at a Harare hospital. Other observers reported seeing dozens of people seeking medical attention for beating wounds at local clinics. Military helicopters were still patrolling the skies over Harare on March 21.

Kadoma

[3](#). (U) On March 19, according to the official press and MDC sources police in Kadoma arrested the MDC MP for Kadoma Austin Mupandawana and about 33 MDC youths who were marching in Kadoma with anti-Mugabe banners and placards. The MDC made efforts to contact Mupandawana and the youths; however, they were apparently transferred to undisclosed police stations and their whereabouts were still unknown as of March [21](#).

Masvingo

[4](#). (U) On March 18 police arrested and released on the same day the MDC MP for Masvingo Central Silas Mangono with other MDC youths in Masvingo. Mangono was arrested and released again on March 19.

[5](#). (U) By March 21 the independent press and the MDC reported that ZDF soldiers beat about 10 people in Masvingo in incidents related to the stayaway. On March 19 ZANU-PF youths stoned and destroyed the house of the MDC provincial chairman for Masvingo, Ms. Masekesa.

Mutare

[6](#). (U) On March 19 according to the independent and official press, and MDC sources, police arrested the MDC MP for Mutare North and MDC Shadow Minister of Defense Giles Mutsekwa and eight other MDC supporters. Police accused Mutsekwa of helping to organize the stayaway, at that point in its second day, and questioned him about its planning. He was still in police custody on March 21.

One Dead

[7](#). (U) On March 18, suspected CIO officers abducted Steven Toner and two other workers from MDC MP for Chimanimani Roy Bennett's commercial farm near Epworth (a suburb of Harare) accusing them of burning a parastatal Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) bus earlier that day in Epworth. All three were beaten severely, Toner died during the beating. On March 19, 50-60 ZDF soldiers arrived at the farm and beat 30 other workers, some severely, including a 55-year old woman, with batons and batons covered with barbed wire.

Other Areas

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18. (U) By March 21 the independent and official press, and the MDC, reported that police had arrested 18 people in Gweru, and 13 in Bulawayo in incidents related to the stayaway.

19. (U) By March 21, the MDC reported that police, ZANU-PF youth, and ZDF soldiers had arrested, beaten, and destroyed the homes of dozens of MDC provincial chairman, MDC officials, lawyers, supporters and activists in the past 2-days, accusing them of helping to plan and carry out the March 18-19 mass stayaway.

Comment:

110. (C) The GOZ appeared taken aback by the success of the March 18 - 19 stayaway and now seems determined to exact retribution from those responsible for organizing it. The Herald reported that police were moving in on the MDC leadership who organized it, and we would anticipate that the GOZ will continue to use the stayaway as an excuse to crack down on ever higher MDC officials in the coming weeks, most likely accusing them under the draconian Public Order and Security Act, (POSA) of instigating public violence. End Comment.

SULLIVAN